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THE EDUCATIONAL FUNCTION OF THE HOSPITAL

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Writing on the subject of education, Herbert Spencer said: "To prepare us for complete living is the function which education has to discharge." The old theory of education was that it was the acquisition of knowledge; the new theory as promulgated by Spencer, is that it is a training of the mental faculties, so that in addition to knowing about things, we are also taught how to accomplish things.

The first duty of the hospital is, of course, to provide for the care and treatment of its patients; but it also has a function beyond this, and that is educational. In the broadest sense, hospitals may be said to be educational to physicians, medical students, nurses, patients, employees and to the community. While the majority of hospitals are not so located as to be available for students of medicine, all hospitals to a certain extent are educational to the other classes mentioned.

In a very able address before the American Hospital Association in 1911, Abraham Flexner made the point that hospitals owed a duty to medical education and unless they met that duty, they failed to accomplish their greatest usefulness. He pointed out that many hospitals are so located as to be of great value to neighboring schools, in that it is possible for them to furnish to such schools the opportunity to study groups of patients with all of the possibilities of practical demonstrations and bedside instruction; and that in failing to meet the needs of such schools, they do not embrace the great opportunity of increasing their own usefulness, both in the exercise of their primary function of caring for the sick and in the exercise of their educational function. He also pointed out that many other hospitals which place their facilities at the disposal of poor, unworthy schools, are likewise failing to meet their responsibilities in that they are fostering these poor schools and therefore poor medical education.

It is unquestionably true that hospitals are becoming each year more and more important factors in the preservation of the public health. There is a constantly growing appreciation of what the hospital means to those who are ill, of its possibilities for educational work and for investigation and research, which while not interfering with the actual care of the patients (the result being quite the contrary), present possibilities of a greater service to mankind generally. The

hospital which welcomes teaching within its walls insures more careful methods, more careful study of the individual case and, generally speaking, better and more thorough treatment for its patients.

In this country we have been surprisingly slow to grasp this fact, considering that the growth of the hospital movement has been so rapid. It is quite probable that the rapidity of hospital development in America has been largely responsible for the lack of appreciation of the larger opportunities. It was only a few years ago that the hospital in this country was considered the place of last resort. Today almost a complete reversal of opinion has taken place and it is now considered the place of first resort for anyone who is seriously ill. With this growing appreciation of the value of the hospital, there has occurred a mushroom-like growth of hospitals, attended with all the evils of too rapid development, namely lack of standards of organization and management, lack of standards as to support, poorly formulated plans, mismanagement and failure to comprehend the greater possibilities of the movement.

Within the last few years, however, there has come a broader conception of what the hospital stands for and of its greater usefulness. This is largely true because of the educational function of the hospital. I have said that the hospital is educational to practically all who live and work within its walls, and to the community as well. Who can doubt that the employees working day after day in such an atmosphere must learn something of value in the way of helpfulness to others, something finer and broader by way of appreciation of life's problems, of human frailties, and of self sacrificing service to others? Who can doubt that the patients, many of them at least, learn these same lessons and at the same time learn how to take better care of their own bodies and how not to be a source of danger to others? These are phases of the educational function not often considered, but nevertheless important.

Of the more important phases, let us consider the education of medical students. In the so-called teaching hospitals, thousands of medical students are trained each year, both in theory and in practice. They are enabled to interview patients and thereby learn how to elicit the necessary information. They are taught what facts to emphasize and what to ignore, what to retain and what to discard. They learn how to examine a patient in order to bring out the abnormal conditions. They learn from the teacher and by actual experience how to recognize a condition and how to reason from the phenomena presented back to the conditions underlying them. Furthermore, having learned at the bedside to recognize abnormal conditions, they learn also what is the proper therapeutic measure, and how to carry it out, which is quite as

important. They are taught not only about a thing, but how to perceive the thing itself. The hospital, then, is the training school for thousands of young men, who go forth each year to give to their fellow man the benefit of that knowledge.

Again, every hospital has its resident staff, numbering all the way from one to a hundred. These young men, already recognized as physicians, continue for one or more years to serve the hospital in order to acquire additional skill in diagnosis, in treatment, in operative technique and in powers of observation and reasoning. Then, too, there is the senior staff of physicians and surgeons, who by the study of large groups of patients, by the experience gained in operating upon large numbers of patients, acquire a skill and technique which makes them authorities in their subjects and leaders in their profession.

In the laboratories, also, are those men who devote their lives to careful routine study of all conditions found, to constant experimental work, as the result of which new facts are being discovered which add to the knowledge of disease and the methods of combatting it. All of this means progress and benefit to mankind.

To the community in which such an institution is located, it has an enormous educational value. The effect which the standards and principles of such an institution has on a community, the development of public interest in these principles, the effect of this group of thoughtful, earnest, skillful workers cannot fail to have a very practical value in the development of public hygiene, better sanitation, better living conditions, and a higher plane of existence.

I am aware that I am telling you nothing new, that in fact, I am only repeating in a little different form what has been said over and over again. Nevertheless, it seems to me that it bears repetition, for the true value of the hospital, in the broadest sense, is not yet generally recognized.

There remains one, a most important phase of the educational function of the hospital—I might say the most important phase—namely, the education of the nurse. I wish to dwell at some length on this subject, because of the need of a more accurate perception of its possibilities. The training school for nurses represents one of the most important departments of the hospital, both because of its function in nursing the patients and because of the public demand for trained nurses.

It is an interesting fact that those who organized some of the early schools had a much better conception of the need of nurse training schools, as educational institutions, than those who are responsible for the majority of the schools of the present day. For example, in the report of the Training School Committee of the Bellevue School, which

was one of the earliest schools established in this country (probably the second), we read the following inspiring and farsighted statement of their aims:

In the course of time we propose to benefit not only Bellevue but all the public hospitals, and also to train nurses for the sick in private houses and for work among the poor.

As the work advances we hope to establish a college for the training of nurses which will receive a charter from the state and become a recognized institution in the country. Branches of this college would be established in connection with hospitals devoted to particular diseases, such as the Woman's Hospital, etc., so that in course of time nurses trained for the treatment of special diseases will be as easily obtainable as physicians. Connected with the college would be a home for nurses, whence they would be supplied with employment and provision made for them when ill or disabled by labor or advancing years. The nurses when trained would receive a diploma or certificate, renewable at fixed periods. Thus the college would control their nurses during their state of pupilage and protect the public from imposition by making it known that a nurse whose diploma or certificate was not in due form had forfeited the confidence of the institution.

The work before us is not an inexpensive one. It should not be regarded merely in the light of a work of benevolence, but as a system of education, calculated to benefit thousands in all ranks of life and, like the quality of mercy, blessing him that gives and him that takes.

Not many training schools for nurses have been started with such a broad conception of the needs, the aims or the value of such a school, as an educational institution. I have said that the growth of the hospital movement has been remarkable. The growth of the nurse training school movement has been equally rapid, for the two have developed together. To this fact, we must attribute many of the difficulties which now attend every effort to standardize these schools and to raise the standard of nursing.

To be more explicit, practically every hospital of any size has its training school for nurses. In the majority of these instances, the hospital has established the school, not with any deep-rooted desire to train nurses for the purpose of serving the public generally, or because of any particular interest in education along this or any other line, but with one idea paramount—to get the nursing work of the hospital done in the simplest and cheapest possible manner. Even a superficial study of the situation will convince one that this is not an exaggeration, and that the majority of boards of trustees, medical boards or ladies' committees, have no conception of the great part which the nurse is playing today in all humanitarian work, nor of the increased demand for educated, thoroughly trained nurses for all phases of public health work. They think of her only as the pupil and as the private nurse.

Many of these schools, I am almost tempted to say the majority, have standards of admission too low or too elastic, have courses of instruction too meager and too spasmodic, and subordinate too completely the interests of the school, as a school, to the practical needs of the hospital. This does not accord with my idea of the educational function of the hospital. The point has been made by Mr. Flexner that hospitals owe a duty to medical education, and we heartily agree with him. I would also make the point that hospitals owe a duty to nursing education, and that this is particularly a function of the hospital.

That the trained physician and surgeon play a very important part in the general scheme of life, none will deny. Does anyone believe that the physician and surgeon could begin to do the splendid work which they are doing today without the trained nurse? Without detracting one whit from the credit due the physician and surgeon, we must admit that medical and surgical technique would hardly be what it is today, had it not been for the development of the trained nurse to supplement his work and to assist him in carrying out the complicated and technical procedures of modern practice. That good nursing is often quite as essential as good medical attention, and that it is often equally responsible for a favorable result, none will deny. Furthermore, the better trained a pupil is, the better nurse she will be. A nurse cannot be overtrained any more than a physician can be overtrained.

If the hospital owes a duty to medical education, it also owes a duty to nursing education, for the same reason applies, namely, the need of such education in the interest of humanity. Only a few hospitals are available for teaching medical students, while many hospitals can educate nurses, and every hospital large enough to properly support, and which properly conducts a training school, renders a great public service by so doing.

The trained nurse is now called upon to perform work which was never contemplated in the beginning. Even the broadest conception did not in the early days conceive of a service much wider than that of skilled attendance upon the sick. In the present day, however, she is a therapeutic agent of great value. She is called upon in almost every phase of our civic and social life to organize, to systematize and to teach, as the private nurse, the visiting nurse, the school nurse, the health department nurse, the rural nurse, sanitary inspector, etc.

Prof. C. E. A. Winslow, of the College of the City of New York, writing on the education of the public health nurse, says:

We need expert sanitary engineers to build and operate our public works; we need sanitary physicians to deal with the broader communal aspects of the spread of communicable disease; we need sanitary bacteriologists and chemists and

statisticians to furnish the special expert knowledge by which all these activities must be guided. More than all, however, we need large bodies of sanitary educators to bring our knowledge to bear on the individual citizen who alone can make so much of it effective. Some of these missionaries of sanitation will be physicians, but most of them will be nurses. And that is why in my judgment, the visiting nurse is the most important figure in the modern movement for the protection of the public health.

Dr. J. H. Mason Knox, late president of the American Association for the Study and prevention of Infant Mortality, writes as follows:

In the last analysis, however, all our work hinges upon the better care of individual babies coming under our influence, and it is here that the trained nurse should be given first place, both because of her unique opportunities and because of the good results which she has and does accomplish.

Testimony of this character can be quoted *ad infinitum*.

Recognizing, then, the desirability and the necessity of training nurses, we may ask is this the function of the hospital? I believe it is distinctly and peculiarly the function of the hospital. I have never been able to believe in the idea of a detached central school, where the pupils will receive their preparatory and theoretical training, and from which they may be sent out to hospitals on assignment, to receive their final and practical training. Such a plan can undoubtedly be made to work, but in my opinion it is not ideal. Experience in medical education should teach us that. The medical school which gives the first two years in one place and the last two in another, is not as desirable as the one (all other things being equal) which enables the student to spend all four years in the same environment. It is not as good for the student and is not as healthy for the development of the school itself. The same principle applies to the training school for nurses.

The training school for nurses, as well as the medical school, must have the facilities for practical training and actual experience in order that the education may be well rounded and complete. Hospitals exist to serve the public. In the broadest sense, then, the hospital should develop along all lines which tend to public service, which are related to public health, and which do not interfere with its primary purpose. In no other way can it attain its fullest efficiency. There are many hospitals, as we all know, which are now exercising this function. In fact, to a greater or lesser extent, they all do. There is, however, a need of standards, else there is danger that the profession of nursing will become filled with quacks; that the public will be led to accept poor service when the best is needed; that worthy young women will be misled into believing that they are to receive a thorough training, when they are offered only an imitation and superficial training, for which

they must give from one to three years of hard, faithful, honest service; danger that the vast possibilities for public service by a profession of skilled workers may be lost because of the failure to foster the growth of this profession and to protect it from commercialism and low standards.

What are the standards needed? In the first place, it should be recognized that this movement which started out simply to meet a hospital need has developed into an educational movement, in response to a vastly more important and vastly broader need of the public at large. In order to safeguard this movement, therefore, each state should standardize its training schools for nurses, and registration should be compulsory as with the physician.

In order that their graduates may be eligible for registration, schools should be obliged to adopt a fairly uniform curriculum, and to give training in all necessary subjects, or else affiliate with other recognized schools capable of supplying training in the subjects in which the weaker school is deficient. Only those hospitals which have more than a minimum number of beds and which are so-called general hospitals, should be recognized as capable of conducting training schools.

Compulsory registration is likewise important; in my opinion, quite as important as for physicians. These are fundamentals and can be met by legislation. In order to insure the educational machinery, endowments for schools are extremely desirable; or at least a certain definite budget should be set aside for strictly school purposes.

Many arguments are heard against such measures, as, for instance, the difficulty of getting a sufficient number of nurses to carry on the work of the hospital, and the need of cheaper nursing service for people of moderate means. With regard to the first, it has not yet been demonstrated that raising the standard of the profession would not attract more applicants to the schools. If such did not prove to be the case, then the training of nurse assistants, or attendants, would undoubtedly meet the situation.

As for the second argument—the need of cheaper service—the same can be said of physicians, yet we are constantly raising the requirements of medical schools and are now considering the desirability of a fifth, or hospital interne year, before allowing the physician to practice. We would not think of recommending half-trained physicians. Then why consider half-trained nurses. The need of hospitals arises partly because of the inability of poor people to employ doctors. Why not consider the hospital as meeting the need for nursing as well? At any rate, if a substitute is needed, let it be found without interfering with the development of, and without lowering the standards of, the nursing profession.

In closing, I wish to repeat that in my opinion it is high time that the medical profession and the public should recognize the importance of high standards in the education of the nurse, and should demand compulsory registration for the nurse, as well as for the physician, the pharmacist, the dentist, the osteopath, and the barber. The hospital should play an important part in all of these movements.

The effect of merely intellectual training in what is commonly spoken of as "useful knowledge," is too often to make one selfish, self-centered, and too much absorbed in the mere mechanics of education, to the neglect of the education of the heart. Training in a hospital is not confined solely to the intellectual sphere; there is also a training in duty, in genuine altruism, in devotion to others and in self-sacrifice for the public good. "To prepare us for complete living is the function which education has to discharge." To prepare us for broader usefulness in public service is a function which the hospital has to discharge.

PRACTICAL HINTS FOR NURSES

By BERTHA H. PHILLIPS, R.N.

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To stimulate the pores of the skin and prevent excessive perspiration vinegar may be added to the sponge bath in the proportion of an ounce of vinegar to a quart of water.

Where it is not possible to secure fresh eggs a teaspoonful of vinegar added to the water in which it is cooked prevents the yolk from breaking and restores the freshness of the flavor.

An improvised ice bag, which will drain off the water as it melts, may be secured by filling a rubber douche bag with ice. To close the mouth it may be folded over and enclosed between two sticks held together at either end by rubber bands, the tube being allowed to drain into a convenient vessel.

To remove the sharp edges from ice it may be placed in hot water and quickly removed.

Cracked ice for use during the night may be wrapped in a flannel and placed in the refrigerator in a bowl. This will obviate disturbing the family of a patient by the pounding of ice.

To keep rubber gloves submerged while sterilizing, first fill them with water.